



Monolith erected in memory of the 60 Molungkimong (Deka Haimong) warriors stands on the very 'Gospel Path' through which Rev. Dr. E. W. Clark first came to the village escorted by the warriors all the way from Sibsagar in 1872.

In the evening, the villagers gathered at the Chapel constructed on their own by the nine (9) members who were earlier baptized at Sibsagar by Dr. Clark on 10th November 1872 to hear the words of the Gospel. Within a few days, fifteen (15) more were converted to Christianity. Consequently, the following Sabbath on 22nd December, 1872, the fifteen converts were baptized by Dr. Clark in the *Jungli Tzübu* (village pond) after which a devotional service was conducted where Dr. Clark delivered the sermon and also administered the Lords Supper. This first baptism in Naga Soil marked the establishment of the first Church in Nagaland at Molungkimong. 22nd December 1872 is regarded as a red letter day for the Nagas as it marks the establishment of the first Baptist Church in Naga Hills.



First Baptistery in Naga Soil

The first baptism in Nagaland took place in this pool on 22nd December 1872 where Rev. Dr. E.W. Clark baptized the fifteen converts. This day is commemorated as Baptist Church foundation day in Nagaland.

Dr. Clark engaged Mr. Noksenmangyang Ozükum and Mr. Nungshikumba Jamir and paid 4 Annas each to dig a pond for baptism beside the village pond.

This event in Naga history unfolded with a lot of danger, threat and sacrifice. This part of history was carved out in an uncertain pretext of better or worse, blessing or curse upon their clan of those who got converted and on the whole village. Amidst criticism and warning from other villages, our great Naga forefathers accepted the Gospel with courage, transparency and simplicity which changed the fate of the Nagas.

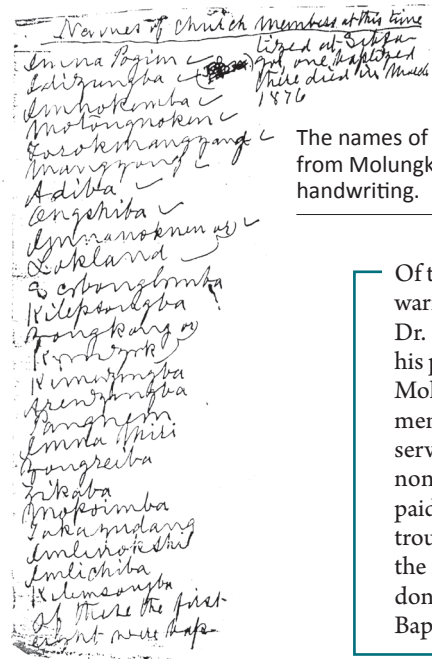
The historical monuments associated with Christianity at Molungkimong are a living testament to the historical genealogy

The first bamboo Chapel at Molungkimong which was built without any assistance from the mission, served to evangelize the natives and also for teaching basics of modern education. Dr. Clark and Godhula introduced the 3Rs method of teaching (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic) and taught alphabets and numerals alongside Biblical stories and hymns. The natives were also taught to read hours, days, months and years in numerals and were instructed on health measures, cleanliness and hygiene in the Chapel, Morung and households.



First Chapel Hall Monument

At this very spot, the Chapel hall was constructed where the First Lord's Supper was administered by Rev. Dr. E.W. Clark on 22nd December 1872.

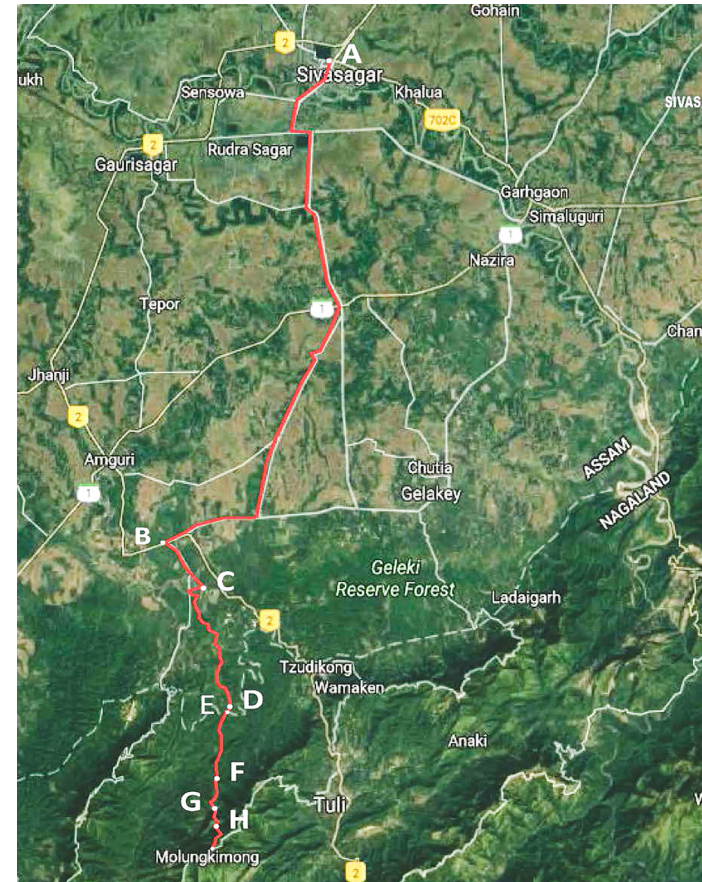


The names of the first 24 Baptized men from Molungkimong written in Clark's handwriting.

Of the 60 Molungkimong warriors who escorted Dr. Clark and carried his possessions safely to Molungkimong, the Christian men volunteered their services without pay. The non-Christians who were paid Rs. 14 in return of their trouble and expense, returned the money to Dr Clark as a donation to the American Baptist Mission.

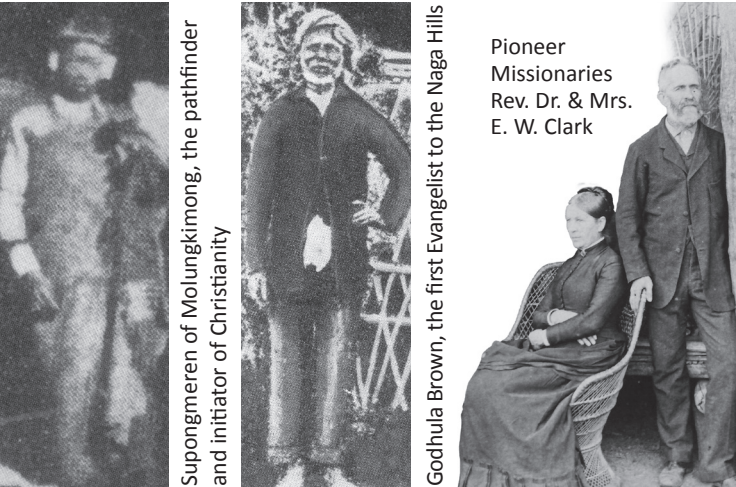
of Christianity in Nagaland through the American Baptist Mission. The tremendous growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland is indeed a spiritual fruition of Dr. Clark's visionary prayer at Molungkimong, where he pleaded to God with tears that the warring Nagas would see the Light of gospel one day. The sacred places at Molungkimong village have been marked by God's own hands which will stand as monuments of God's miraculous work and His sustaining Grace for Nagas.

The First Gospel Route Map from Sibsagar to Molungkimong



Dr. E. W. Clark arrived at Sibsagar from Boston in 1869 and took charge of the Press and Assam Mission of the American Baptist Missionary Union at Sibsagar. During the mission work of Clark among the tea garden workers, he became associated with a zealous Assamese Evangelist, Godhula, one of the early converts from Assam.

THE MISSION PIONEERS

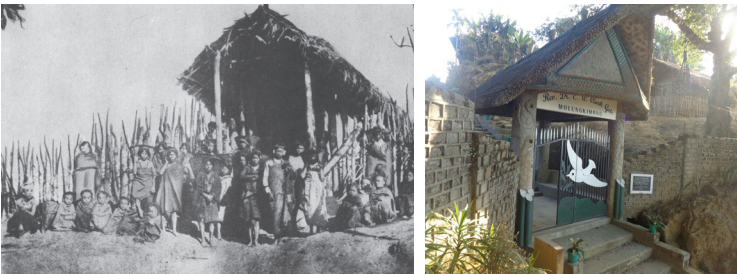


At a time when Clark’s eyes were set on the Naga hills, he incidentally got acquainted with Supongmeren (Native of Molungkimong) through Godhula. Within few years of acquaintance, the three developed a strong friendship with reciprocal interests.



Ruins of the Gargaon Ahom Raja’s Palace, Sibsagar. Dr. Clark, Supongmeren and Godhula viewed Naga hills from the top of this place.

While Godhula and Dr. Clark were drawn into evangelizing the headhunters, Supongmeren was fascinated by the teachings of Christianity and school system at Sibsagar. Clark recounts the event in the following words - “These men were down from the hills to trade ...they stood peering in at the children who were studying and reciting.”(Bowers 1929:197) What ensued was Supongmeren’s act of teaching Ao language, custom and culture to Godhula and Clark and the former’s acquisition of basic English and Assamese. Clark recounts the event in the following words - “Becoming interested in



The then Molungkimong Village (Deka Haimong) gate which was opened to welcome Rev. Dr. E. W. Clark, escorted by the 60 warriors, for the first time by the Kosasanger Village Council, on 18 December 1872.

these simple people, I learnt a little of their language, and as they knew some Assamese I was able to talk to them.”(Bowers 1929:198)

The Ao Naga literature relating to translation, language, culture and songs were initiated by Supongmeren at Sibsagar which began during October 1871.

Godhula explained everything about the new religion and further assured that the God of the new religion will stop head-hunting and sickness in the village and that God would deliver peace and harmony among the people. Supongmeren

was fascinated to hear the good news since the natives lived with threat of enemies, deadly diseases and famine. As his interest grew in the promise of the Gospel, he was convinced that this God would liberate them from every possible problem and fear. P. T. Philips records that Supongmeren lived with Godhula and his wife Lucy from December 1870 till October 1871 and was baptized in early 1871 by Clark at Sibsagar (Philips 1976:53-54). Supongmeren, along with other natives of the village, persistently invited Godhula and Clark to their village to teach them the gospel and also teach the ways of knowledge to their children especially after what they saw in the classroom at Sibsagar. We see the same event in Clark’s own words - “During the next few months the number of parties coming to see the school increased. Time after time they called on me and insisted that I go with them to the hills. I refused every invitation for I knew that there was no security there. I saw that they were anxious for something better for their children...but as for me the risk was too great to be taken at that time.”(Bowers 1929:198). More so, Naga Hills was beyond the control of the British flag, but the Natives of Molungkimong assured to protect him and as such Dr. Clark promised to visit Molungkimong. To Clark’s surprise, Godhula, volunteered to go with them immediately saying that he is a servant of the Master and in His name and strength he can go with them. And thus Godhula, the young Assamese, became the first to carry the Gospel to the Naga hills. Eventually, Godhula made a

trip to Molungkimong village with Supongmeren and some other Molungkimong natives in October 1871. However, on their arrival at Molungkimong, the village elders suspected Godhula as an agent of East India Company and kept Godhula in a small rude hut. During the confinement he narrated stories from the Bible and sang songs. One song he sang with passionate zeal that touched the natives was ‘*Temolung Meyipang, Temolung Meyipangma No!*’ (“To-day, hear His voice”). The influence of peace and love began to soften their hard hearts and they called this rude hut “the sweet home,” the peaceful place. Later, when the elders found Godhula’s goodness, they released him and provided him best of hospitality. As he got access to the people, he sang, prayed and told stories from the Bible with the help of his friend and translator, Supongmeren. When Godhula proposed to return to sibsagor, women and children wept, and to do him proper honour forty men was sent by the village authority to accompany him to the door of the mission bungalow in sibsagor. In the winter of 1871, Godhula made several trips to the village and in the following year in April, Godhula was accompanied by his wife, Lucy, to Molungkimong to further evangelize the Ao Natives. The natives went on talking about the new stories in their houses, jhum fields and every possible space and they hurried back to the village in the evening from their fields and huddled around Godhula and listened to newer Biblical stories. The story telling sessions included moralizing accounts of Abraham, Elijah, Solomon, Daniel, Noah, Jesus and others to the amazement of the natives. Godhula also professed that God would free and save them from the adversaries of famine and plague and that they will be alleviated of all suffering if they accept the new religion.

Rev. Dr. E.W. Clark Monument: On this very site Clark and his servant Kenowar lived with Mr. Bendaḡnūken Longchar from 2nd March to 24th October 1876.



As the hearts and minds of the villagers were drawn in closer to the new religion, the general Village Council of Molungkimong resolved to accept the new religion. The council decided that the new religion will be accepted with collective responsibility of consequent adversity or fortune and to that end, one representative of every clan would be baptized. As the names of representatives were given out, some other zealous natives also volunteered to baptize. Godhula accompanied by nine natives returned to Sibsagar with his first fruits of labor and were baptized by Clark on 10th November, 1872 and their names were registered in the Sibsagar Baptist Church. Rev. S. W. Rivenburg records, “On their return to their mountain home, a small chapel was built in the village” with the permission of the Molungkimong Kosasanger Village Council.

In a short while, with the seeds of evangelism, fifteen more natives were ready to accept the new religion. The Village Council made necessary arrangements and made an appointment and invited Dr. Clark to the village. Since it was a dangerous expedition for Clark, more so it was beyond the British flag, and a very risky task on the part of the natives to protect the life of the White man, the Village Council sent sixty warriors to escort Dr. Clark.

The group set out for Molungkimong from Sibsagar on 16th December through the ‘*Rongsensü Lenmang*’ (Ao-Ahom Trade Route that ran through Molungkimong and connected Ao villages with Assam). After the tiring day’s trip, they slept the first night in Col. Buckingham Bungalow (Residence of Tea Garden Manager) at Amguri.



Col. Buckingham Bungalow at Amguri

The next day they set out into the realm of wild animals and head hunters and after the exhausting day’s journey, took rest by the bank of *Tsurang (tero)* river in the perilous jungle under the vigilant eyes of the warriors. The third day after the fatiguing uphill journey, they reached *Angotsükong* hillock from where, as part of their strategic plan, the natives sent out smoke to signal the arrival of the White man in their village, which prepared the eager villagers to receive the group. Clark, safe yet exhausted, arrived at the Molungkimong village gate escorted by the sixty warriors on Wednesday, 18th December 1872 about 12 o’clock.